POETRY QUARTERLY

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EDITORIAL

PUBLISHERS are still inundated with demands from poets, good, bad and indifferent to publish their MSS. With costs at their present high level this means that he must charge anything from 8s. 6d. to 10s. 6d. or even 12s. 6d. for a cloth bound volume with the result that sales of the book may be less than 100 copies. Fewer and fewer publishers are now able to throw away hundreds of pounds on a prestige book, and an unknown poet's first book is very rarely even that. So how are poets to get into print. The philistine leers broadly and says this doesn't matter. There are too many bad poets in print already. But bad poets are a condition of discovering good new poets. The Jean Ingelows and Felicia Hemans must be published so that posterity can pick the Wordsworths and the Shelleys. Believing that the price is a very real deterrent Miss Erica Marx has been publishing from *The Hand and Flower Press* a series at a shilling called *Poets in Pamphlet*. This has been running for nearly two years and the response has been excellent. For her first attempt she has selected poets who have never before appeared in book form thus giving a chance to the unknown young poet. Another series may be mentioned in this category. This is *The Crescendo Poetry Series* published by *The Latin Press* at St Ives, Cornwall, The subscription for six numbers is 15s. Those responsible for these uncommercial undertakings—for they cannot do more than cover their expenses, and indeed risk a not inconsiderable loss—should receive our respect and gratitude. They may be the forerunners of a new poetic renaissance.

NORMAN LEVINE

Crabbing

Timbers heaving to heaven we sailed at seven
With bait aboard, wet, so sliced for smell.
Gurnards stinking, guts, cut and skewered.
And our faces still fresh from the bundled bed.
We sailed alone and silent in the light of morning
From harbour shelter and a three sided bell.
Saw the wind yawn to stretch skin over water
Cough the white gossip, clot, into silence.
Sun over water. Sea sick with colour.

And hungry the gull with her 'turrow turrow'
Gathered an escort of gliding white hulls.
Cherry splashed beaks plunged heads into water,
Slitbeak smiles spread morning's laughter.
They, and the rudder, looked for our market.
And by all the braille signs we found the stall.
There we circled, staring at landscape, waiting
for the tide to be well and truly in. Now sea domestic
Broke skin for marker, and there, the flagstick, rose.

We stood by the wheelhouse where spray was spitting
And lifted the black sheath on to the mizzen
Cupped up to heaven, steady for direction,
We cut our engine and steered with sail.
Soon the blue fullness laid out its carpet
In continual cadence of floor, wall, floor.
Silently we came forward, now weaving, now sliding
Slow as a boxer with hands cautious in rhythm,
Pulling a rope's strength and wetness aboard.
And while we were heaving, now to horizon,
The winch kept turning as a potter's wheel:
Rope swung-dripping, ourselves waiting. What lodger
Within prison-wire, turned chimney, inside?
The first cage broke angry out of its grievance.
Craw, Craw, was shouted in simple alphabet.
(a Craw for a Crayfish, a blue for a Lobster)
Words of children, all sound and colour
Formed a sweated sentence with a hardworked verb.

After the first, the others filled spaces:
Of Craw empty, Blue empty, and sometimes Crab.
Nervous jewels of colour, now covered, now hidden
As caged changed to parlour and prepared to receive
The new bait, now hanging, so silent by chimney.
And still in that rhythm the pots went over
Side, to foam, pulling, depth under bubbles;
Stretching ropes, straightened, behind us, dove.
And there we left them, for tomorrow's tide.

Returning we let rudder find fast its direction,
And running as a hurdler, we rose, up and over,
Oak ribs to water keeled back those tons.
Shuddering we shot on, sometimes to heaven.

And land goes with us walking
In shapes the shadows formed. Where stone pierced
bone
The earth made windows. Who watched our
homecoming.

MADGE HALES

Two Seasons

The frost denied the season in my vein
All the tears of snow claimed my weeping,
Sad and sullen the bubbling laughter sank
And feeble the way of wren and swan.

For the bleak journey strung us motionless
Our lips shrunk to a shrill endurance,
This was the edge of the last suffering
The iron gates clanged on outraged flesh.

When grey on the road the gothic angel
With rooms red with the pomp of fire,
Food that conveyed a field of poppies
And giant chairs, indolent as august.

Bees left their winter for your tongue
And your great laughter dwarfed the room,
The hour a century sunned before us,
A winter atrophied in stone.

JOHN BAYLISS

Fête at Rambouillet by Fragonard
(*Before the Revolution of* 1789)

They came by water to these dark green bowers.
Here, islanded in flowers, their secret loves
Fled or unfolded: cosseted like doves
Lady to cote would fly in the night hours.

Ruffled the plumage, yet the fee was light
To pay the boatman for such gaiety,
Or the guitarist for his song and flight
Into the darkness where no eyes could see.

Gold the thin bracelet on the balustrade
Under the purple canopy; the fret
Only of branches parting, pushed aside,
The lover satisfied or following yet.

Step after step, by statues without stain,
See the gay puppets go to their soft caves.
The torchlight reddens the water. What shall rain
In that cold winter when there are no leaves?

SEYMOUR GRESSER

Among the Ruins

A Trinity of Dream

I

Smoke

Life opens its pomegranite stain
and wounds from the broken pebble,
wracks the soldier foot, witnesses the city's fall—
and faces in their foreign glass
see my face pass who will not look again
to shatter the fragments finally.

Through market places where I saw her hair
and I as man was born and killed
among the rituals of love,
life held, returning
the golden rib born and bent beginnings
where the torque is meaning,
and all else passes but the turning
That returns to walk and mumble at our graves.

Hear not my life has come again
where fingers in their turtle clutch
take seed and sanction from my loins,
bring forth hungry sons of my naming,
forged among the fingers' treasure
and the memory within her eyes, where the phoenix
burns
and the son sleeps who will not kill the snake,
nor seek the golden apple of illusion.

Let no fish hear
nor leap the spittle of my sidewalk bait,
with autumn turning
the leaves belly-brown and crackled,
with the leaf-backs still green
twin of their speaking color,
age between their voices. . . . .

I walk among ruins, lips the fingers touch,
yet mourn no steeples
nor returning smoke, a burning leaf
heard in its shadow

the heart's transparent smile remembers
faces dropped in blood
as this cracked glass grew warm and trembled
images of birds whose feet were wet with sun.

A Trinity of Dream

II

Hymn and Revival

Sung though no word forms
and heard though left unspoken,
the tree never believed its autumn falling,
the leaf returned just once and fell away.

And living by public stairs,
hiding in crowds of faces
        sleep with me, mask of my beginning,
        sleep with me as I have turned
and bent the fragile finger toward your pointing.

. . . . . curved in its love the sea
dips and turns, arcs and burns its salt,
these shadows of our eyes
and troughs among our rusting heads . . . .

Awake with me—sun of no cold.
Awake as the stalk-straight water
bathed between our faces and prayers
        for no future or numeral to build
the million from the one,
the star-scatter from the singular . . . take all but the
    heart
sung without word and heard for no man's meaning.

A Trinity of Dream

III

Brittle is the Star

The men grow old in summer,
fields that mask no mirror, rightly;

it is a dust of wings descends
and cannot rise again to take us,
night alone the heart's strategy . . . dawn in its dusk
I bathe my face in youth's clay sea
and cannot hear the lame foot of my future.

Summer not my bride the unblessed hay,
nor autumn in her fingers with twig-strong wings
or I who father seed
the cup of her shoulder pouring forth water,
rising in its truth to such an honesty
it can't exist, nor child the nine month sleep.

I hear my heart this summer
and watch the burial flight begin
this symbol child, encompassing, the eye circles
how many faces, draws them
gently
shovel to shovel in the duelling earth,
gravel in its reign brings forth these prophet moments,
son, whose infant is its scream,
bears not the bird's return.

FRANCIS CABUCHE

The Carnival of Beasts

Carnivora and carnival:
A man with the head of a beast
And a plume of rush light
Held aloft like shame in the night air,
A naked body of flame in the night air,
And the lewd and the spurned
With shattering lips who cast
All to the winds of carnival,
Floating the banner of bawdiness.
The faces of men deranged
With the effort of quelling thought,
With the rich red wine that holds,
Like a crystal ball, the image of fate.
Dazed, with their eyes on earth
And their feet on air, they dance,
And tabour, flute and drum
Call to the fuddled brain,
To the eyes that release their hold
On their guardian lids and wink
In a flittering woman's face.

Let them be alone with themselves,
In the warp and weft of themselves,
Strange and aloof with themselves,
Kings and Queens without boots
In a kingdom built of sticks and bones.
In a castle built of playing cards.

OSWELL BLAKESTON

Intruder

Worn carpet on the floor
Your flowers are not for me
For they were strewn before
The room's established ghost.

E. FEIN

Genesis

On the day the earth was made
Two men—cousins I think they were—
Met by chance
They spoke of the weather. They said
It was rather warm and dry

They spoke of hummocks bald as peaches
And said: All things considered
We're well off
(They could not have considered much, I think)
They laughed at the moon
—He vain in the sun's glory
(These pedestrians were wise,
Though hardly tactful)
Before they parted they taught each other tricks
One how to knot string
One how to cleave a stone
One how to comb hair
One how to cut wood
(They came out unequal in the exchange, I'd say)
They left each other then
And in time must have died

Now the world is old and cold
And somewhat damp
From the atmosphere four footprints have been
fashioned
That is how I know the tale

P. A. T. O'DONNELL

Preretrospect

Remember, brothers and sisters, we're observed;
Consider, who inhale the astringent sun,
Watch windowed bubbles rise in Regent Street
Divine the roots of love through twining hands
Or grow into its mountainous embrace,
Follow the file of fells across your glass,
Plan ocean crossings, trilogies and homes,
Breast choral tides or lance the tented sheaf,
Sip in the shade, win set and match or fling
Islands of water from a stately blade,
Balance the budget, find a formula,
Breathe billowed clover, skim a froth of cloud,
At page or canvas tremble to transmute
Your urgency to light, consider how
You will become your bottle's labelling.
The signs are thick about us, warbling notes
Pervade the wilderness, but we are fed
On artificial air; we do not live
At all, or, if we do, live blatantly
In all political sin. The knowing looks
Of journalist, sixthformer, soapboxer,
Whose slick, conditioned wisdom shall explore
The Feckless Fifties! Ah, my friends who skate
Uncharted ice and yet contrive to keep
Heads below sand, remember we're observed
In less than pity through those narrowed eyes
From reasonable-treasonable towers;
For, brothers, sisters, half of them are ours!

STANLEY VAN VLIET

Journey at Daybreak to Finistère

Malleted rails articulate
The click-roll-click of nightlong wheels;
Within the brain's reticulate
Taut coils percussive time unreels.

Now comes the half-pervasive day,
Stringent to leech blood's umber from
Swart fields, to fortify the grey
Voluted eastern monochrome.

Now elbows of segmental hills
Unflex, permit the train to pass,
Engulf their deep-thatched domiciles;
Each passed vale sharpens to crevasse.

Now hills flow back, space-worn, dispelled;
Crepuscular come the undulant leas,
Irregularly sentinelled
By phallic perimetric trees.

Now meadow-swamps ejaculate
Slant sudden dayglare out of black;
Paludal streams comb delicate
Green water-lichen weaving back;

And rain swarms past, and arched above
Quimperlé vaults the rainbow strand
Whose end floods down the flowing of
The wet and intervening land . . . . . .

Slope to the ultimate blue cove—
White village, shored serenity,
Whose estuary tides approve
The mandates of the ensphering sea.

NOEL HOLMES

The Greenhouse

A boy, heavy with his private dream world, wandered
By arcs of flower beds. He saw the diagrams of colour,
Alyssum, montbretia, calceolarias, geraniums,
With uncomprehending pleasure. He stood, his hands
Feeling the crenulated rock, and then, flipping the water,
Played with the fears of freckled goldfish feet below.
The correct, commandment-keeping billiard-table lawn
Repressed him. Cautiously he skirted the pear tree's half-closed
Umbrella; walked amongst tickling webs in the potting shed
And sidled out, disillusioned, into the creeper-thwarted
Sun. But his fun was in the greenhouse, central beyond the lawn.
He could turn the key with a staccato *rap-crack*
Like an unoiled mouse trap snapping life from the sniffing whiskers.
Inside, a hose ran from a dark tank—a deaf-aid
Hanging stiffly from the ear. On wooden shelves
Ranged the inevitable geraniums, red, pink and white.
But what the boy remembered, lifelong, more than these
Were the fuchsias, splaying like fascinating fireworks
Caught at the galaxy by some lens with technicolour—
Caught with such impress of pendulous brilliance
That the boy could never see those lobes again,
In Devon combe, under the darkening thatch,
Or on the craggy walls of a Cumbrian farm,
But he remembered those burning embers of fuchsia
His grandfather cooled with his long-nosed watering can.
The greenhouse breathed a kind, dull earthy smell,
A soil-like stuffiness, a warmed, odorous stagnancy.
The crinkled bass hung ready for the undisciplined shoot,
And beetles hurried across the tied bundles of canes.
Outside the dogs might bark senselessly, or the parrot,
Throned on a table, demonstrate in his cage.
Yet there was always freedom here for the boy
To take his vague dreams, or withdraw sheepishly
When ignorance had blundered him into shame.
The opiate warmth transported him, the small emptiness

Was his, so that he grew uneasy when some invader came,
His grandfather, abrupt and vigorous,
Or one of his uncles, to scatter on the quivering plants
A shower of critical hailstones. But most times
He crept in and stayed alone, looking at the pots,
The dead fly caught in the cobweb, the dusty syringe,
The velvet throats of purple petunias,
And the cactus irresistible to his fingers.
It was only years later that this musty silent greenhouse,
With its bags of fertiliser and bonemeal,
Became in his mind the symbol and the smell of death.

THOMAS BLACKBURN

The Exorcism of Ghosts

The exorcism of ghosts in the night by a tree
In a bed in the room of a house where they were alone
And the terror far more than they could bear or understand,
Is a child reading his parents' graveyard stone
And the lives of the dead in the palm of his hand.

The anguish of ghosts in the dark by a poisonous tree
Of a girl by a stream and a man in his bed in the dark,
Is now in the dark as the stream, the bed and the tree,
Cold as the stream and hard as the bed and cruel as the tree.

The exorcism of ghosts is the mind of a child
They come from the night to the door of his mind
And listen to words they never knew how to say,
The thought of their child is a light in the dark
And his search is a path for ghosts who have lost their way.

The child shall have need of the ghost and the ghost of the
child,
They shall bend to the narrow wall of skin and bone,
Dividing the quick and the dead till a cock screams
And all come praising out of the haunted stone.

L. D. LERNER

Bones in Africa

'The wain upon the northern steep
Descends and lifts away.
O I will sit me down and weep
For bones in Africa.'

A. E. HOUSMAN.

I

Dark the moon, and dark the night sweating its hard
bright beads of agony,
And dark the swinging, turning globe that shoulders
the heavy mists away;
The wet world loomed in a cloud, the lands were folded,
wrapped in the timid dea,
Asia and Europe in locked embrace, and lingering
under them Africa
—A teasing shadow on the map, a whispered hint in
the idle brain,
Where swamps and serpents and strange rites strew the
pale parched bones on a boundless plain.

So Housman dreaming on a damp afternoon,
Before a grate like a gashed fish, when fire
Pours from its throat, before a grate
Where salamanders licked his sleep,
After two cups of weak tea,
And a crumpet heavy on his heart,
Secreting his poetry.

O I will sit me down and weep
For bones in Africa.

II

Africa has her lovers,
The heavy-breasted mammy on the map.
They hear the sun exulting on their backs,
The toil they sail they shuffle in her tracks,

They do not dream unless a fever lures,
Food and destruction only light their fires;
Most barter dumb thoughts in their empty minds;
And when one combs the brittle earth and finds
Occasionally, a hot black polished word,
It sleeps in his huge vaulted heart, unheard.

I buried my words in Sahara sand.
Some I dug deep, and they lurked out of light,
Mouldered, melted in the earth,
Mingled in the soil;
Deeper than roots grope and finger,
Fertilised the sand the white
Dunes; that was all.

Others lay close to the surface;
Thoughts wound under their ribs.
A bone protruded; an arm
Or a knee-socket sucking the light,
To trip all lovers dancing
Their minuet of words,
To bruise the singing shin upon
The jagged edge of meaning.

And some words lay in the sun,
Lie still among the sands;
Whiter than the buff bluff dunes
Greyer than the swirling sky,
Neither decaying, reviving,
Nor living nor nourishing dying,
Words in the mind's desert
Under a brash blue sky,
Where no pedantic curious foot
Ever comes by.

With bones charred in the sun,
With bright dead words I draw,
Sketch and explore
The warm dark lines, the sensual shape,
The mammy on the map.

III

Africa wears red for mourning.
Tyrian red on the mammies,
Pillar-box red on the map,
Stains of burnt sienna
Smeared in a sacred place.

With dull drums grieving
And the hum of the sun on the head,
Africa mourns its dead:

The filigree skeleton of a snake,
A squashed bird, flung tree,
A man's bones hastily hidden;
The torn ligaments of a lorry,
Spine snapped, sprawled on its back,
Limbs grasping the sky.
And the people who streamed and swarmed
Like white corpuscles where it lay,
Now loosened, drifted flowed away.
Only a Negress lies like a dead cell
Lumped on the ground.

With dull drums dancing
And the hum of the sun on the head,
Africa hails its living:

The man in the blue elephants
Whose polished face shines purple where the white light hits,
Whose head sank among the heavy blankets,
The soft feet strode from Kano,
Bled on the red road, red
Unyielding laterite; the black feet bled,
The blue cloth swayed from Kano.

The coloured laughter in the hospitals
Grows gaily green and crimson on the slopes,
The terraced foothills of the waiting women,
Clutching their wizened fears, their wizened hopes.

This looks no place for you Death,
Among those crags and wrinkled rocks of faces,
They toss you brown and bouncing down the valleys,
Fling you up thighs and breasts and hilly places.

IV

Sänta Cruz kicked her heels and leaned;
The sailyard strayed up the damp sky,
Down the ashen sea. Diaz gazed, dusted with spray
Africa over his head.

Like sea and sodden sky the present
And future mingled; his eye
Saw the cattle that strayed on the sprayed beach; and among them
The bones of the dead.

NOEL WELCH

Retired

At last he is free to live the life he chooses
To gallop in the direction of each prevailing wind
Or against the wind, to kick if he pleases
To roll all the daisies flat.
But only in retrospect can he take the fences
Now the eventual hedges fence him in.
Sometimes his head will appear in a gap
As if he regretted the time when the countryside fled
From the flagellation of his vigorous hoof
But mostly he prefers to stand still for hours together
As if he would compel the land and its slow seasons
To appear more hurried far than he.
Only when the wind tosses his docile mane
Is he still, in spite of himself, ahead of the field
Taking the untakable fences
That encroach on the equine soul.

JAMES KIRKUP

The Flowers of Discontent
or, Leaves from my Commonplace Book

The only luxury possible to the poor young man is to let his hair grow long.

* * *

I opened a book, and a huge grey bird flew out in a cloud of dust. How long it had been there heaven only knows. If someone put it there wanting to give me a fright or to do me some greater harm, the plan did not succeed, for the bird vanished into the ceiling, leaving only a faint trace.

* * *

I should not mind being a woman, if only men weren't so awful.

* * *

During the night the hot-water tank kept making the most alarming sounds. It seemed as if somehow a mermaid had got trapped inside that huge zinc cylinder and was plunging about in agony, lashing out powerfully with her tail at the reverberating sides.

It sounded as if she were being boiled alive. However, she must be dead by now.

* * *

The greatest joy in life is to do good by stealth, and to have it found out by accident.

* * *

All the Fun of the Fair

I have laced my high-heeled boots up to my wading thighs, and stride through the vicarage garden-fete cracking my long, thrilling whip, injuring a number of people rather badly.

Fortunately, they are so stupid they all think I am 'just part of the show'. Which of course I am.

* * *

Pensée

An army marches on its sexual organs.

* * *

This Day

There was a distant clap of thunder out of a clear and sunny sky. No lightning. You could hear the whole village pause in the hot haymaking afternoon and listen, just as two men hoeing

in a vast field will stop a moment as the daily train puffs down the country valley, and tell each other, leaning on their hoes: 'It's three o'clock'.

But this thunder told no hour, no minute. It held both centuries and seconds, but it held no time.

Unless, as we perhaps all secretly thought, it was the crack of doom.

* * *

Poem

I take great pleasure in awarding the title 'Poem' to something which is patently prose. It is my only protection against the Booksy Boys, those poet-bishops of our blatantly broadcast age (and they are many), who, in utter self-bafflement award the title 'Poem' to anything which apparently is *not* prose. But only apparently.

* * *

Title of my next Book of the Month

'The Bedside Book of Sex,' or, 'Confessions of an Elderly Enfant Terrible.'

* * *

Secret Thought

One gets no satisfaction out of washing clean hands.

* * *

O, that long, pale-violet hand with the rich finger-nails all green with close-cropped grass that waves to me, sometimes, out of the half-opened bottom drawer in the massive old oak dresser; or now and then, at noon, shifting its blood-red rings from one finger to another, it parts the closed curtains of my rope-hung cabin.

It always looks as if it ought to have five fingers, like all other hands, but it never does.

* * *

As my face drew nearer to the mirror, and as that face came closer and closer to that other which is my own; the mouth was smiling, half-opened for the expected kiss, the cold shock of teeth: to my faint surprise the glass gracefully melted, covering my whole face with a mask that was made of what is behind, but never beyond, mirrors.

What people thought who looked at me in this state I cannot guess. It certainly was a case of love at first sight.

All the most modern conveniences. Yes, I know. So helpful, and so (generally) efficient.

But I have been persuaded by an engineering friend of mine—he is *something* on the railways—to have my new flush-lavatory fitted in a sedan chair which belonged to my ancestors, and used to stand in the derelict coach-house doing nothing, all four arms raised in a forlorn gesture of wooden resignation.

Now, when I wish to pay visits, I get two of the ploughboys from the Manor to carry me out over the fields.

The slight jolting movement is not unpleasant—rather is it at times distinctly helpful. One gets there, too, 'as the crow flies', though stiles are sometimes rather a bother.

But the rattle of the chain and the swish of my little cistern frighten all the birds away. It's an excellent idea, and so good for the fields.

Of course, I never use it when we are standing in a station.

* * *

Fortunately this pencil sometimes has an indiarubber point, and rubs my words out before I write them.

* * *

About to roll a penny down a quiet little board at a country fair, I was suddenly seized with ungovernable fear.

The worn old cards were pinned down with rusty drawing-pins. A loudly-shouting figure dropped clanking piles of pennies from one hand to the other. I felt my forehead sweating with terror under the naphtha flares. The hand holding the penny over the slotted runway was shaking with fright. My knees wobbled and knocked and my ankles seemed to be running away.

I turned, and ran with chattering teeth along the cinder paths, under a blaze of revolving lights, until I reached the comparative gloom and quiet of a rubbish-tip. There I buried myself under the stinking ashes and empty cans until I had calmed down a little.

When I emerged, shaking the cinders out of my hair, brushing myself down with hands whose roughness and power to hurt surprised me, I found that the fair was ended. I overtook the caravans, trundling along the sea-road, each with an old zinc bath clanging on a nail beside the open half-door.

I was sorry to see them go. But I was also much relieved. Ah! what it is to be a bad loser!

* * *

Chained naked to a rusty harrow, I was being dragged quite mercifully over a field of stones, because my tormentor is so stupid, he had put me on top instead of underneath the harrow. There he was, standing at the wheel of the lunging tractor, looking back at me and laughing his stupid laugh.

But slowly he stopped laughing, a look of intense cunning came into his eyes. He stopped the tractor, and, with a gradually-dawning realisation of the greater pain he might inflict, began to laugh uproariously as he chained me *underneath* the harrow.

Cruelty is the brother of invention.

DEREK STANFORD.

VERULAM: A STATEMENT

TO-DAY I have been thinking of Beddoes, Clare, and Darley, and other tragic impresarios of summer. How they would have relished this country weather: the cows like hawthorn, the boughs spurting milk, and the abbey's grey roof an exploding precious stone!

Down by the ramparts walked the spear-bearing ghosts, the trees flowed like foaming rivers through the air, the moats seemed cool lumber-rooms of shadows—attics of stillness where time had run to seed.

Then out beyond the avenues, into the light, where the ploughed fields bounced like sorbo-balls, and the leap-frogging pastures tobogganed downhill, to the woods where the briars importuned us by the ankle. And there we camped, and drank our beer, and ate our apples, and pondered our work, while numberless caterpillars up amongst the branches came parachuting down to correct our spelling-errors.

What annunciation did they come to proclaim, these slender green threads of translucent living tissue? I could not tell; but took the whole day to represent a realisation of that ancient promise: 'And thy lips shall be red with wine, and thy teeth shall be white with milk'.

Others felt that abundantly enough: Samuel Palmer, for instance, with his landscapes from the Psalms, his apple-blossom as heavy as half-crowns and as thick as hydrangeas or rhododendrons; with his lambs newly dipped from a creamery, and his harvest-moons like the globes of an oil-lamp specially adapted

for burning liquid honey. (Then the shutter had slipped down over the sun, and his brush had ceased to anoint the canvas.)

But Darley, Beddoes, and Clare had their vision; a vision of summer that never quite focussed, never quite came to fruition and plenty; was hectic in promises but never promised peace. For Clare, summer stood as an image of love; and love, rejected, developed into madness. For Beddoes, summer stood as an image of love; and love, too long suppressed, could only offer death. For Darley, summer stood as an image of love; and love, undiscovered, asked for oblivion; for respite, nepenthe for thought and feeling. Respectively, behind the summer's riot lay insanity, suicide, and deadly depression. These were the ends which visited my betters.

Yet still I maintain that summer is a vision, and that in its blue system we find ourselves presented with the only promised land we can certainly be sure of.

Some argue that summer is a bait of nature, a decoy for the dedicated spirit, and that the climate of blessedness is winter—season of ice and iron rations. These are they who would have man find salvation off his own bat in a bankrupt cosmos; who would climb to heaven by a ladder they have carpentered out of non-existent wood.

But suppose the world as a body is not quite the Manichean clockwork we sometimes imagine. Suppose that beauty, goodness, and truth are purifications, not contradictions, of the vigour of growth and the bounty of reaping.

In this case, need we first strip the land, operate upon the foliage and amputate the blossom; need we call in December to make of summer a dry bleached skeleton in a scentless cupboard? Need we do all this before we are able to conceive of the isolate existence of the spirit. If summer is fullness, munificence of being, shall we not discover a movement of spirit, a parallel sap, occurring within us?

Let me remember, then, that summer is a vision, that vision feeds on love, and that love asks for praise.

GUIDES AND PHILOSOPHERS

Key to Modern Poetry. LAWRENCE DURRELL. (Peter Neville, 12/6).
Tradition in the Making of Modern Poetry. Vol. I. HOWARD SERGEANT. (Britannicus Liber. 12/6).

A great deal of our present-day intellectual confusion arises from a lack of understanding between the different symbolisms employed, on the one hand, by the various scientific disciplines, and on the other, by religion and philosophy. A proper appreciation of poetry, in which the symbolic properties of language are deliberately exploited and explored, might go a long way to clearing up this confusion. This view seems to be implicit in Mr. Durrell's admirable book. It is the work of one, who is not only a poet of distinction, but who has also made an intelligent study of modern scientific thought, and especially of psychology and anthropology. Taking as his starting point the differences of style which separate Tennyson's *Ulysses* and Eliot's *Gerontion*, Mr. Durrell seeks to relate these to the changes in the world-picture which have come about in the near century which lies between them. This was very well worth doing, and it is particularly to be hoped that this book will be read by those—there are many such nowadays—who, having received a scientific education, seek to gain some understanding of the humanities in relation to the modern world.

The second part of Mr. Durrell's book (originally delivered as British Council lectures in Argentina) consists of a survey of twentieth century poetry down to the end of the 'thirties. Here his judgments seem to me to err on the side of safety.

Mr. Sergeant engages in a more detailed survey of the same field in his book, whose prime purpose is to demonstrate the continuity of modern poetry with the main English tradition. This first volume deals with the transition from the Victorians, and with the Georgians and Imagists. A second volume will carry this survey down to our own day, while a third will deal with the poetry of the Commonwealth. The present volume is scholarly and judicious, but the later volumes should give the author more scope for original criticism. The whole should be invaluable to University and Adult Education teachers, and those engaged in the organisation of discussion groups, as well as the general readers.

JOHN HEATH-STUBBS

POEMS FOR PALACES

Europa And The Bull by W. R. RODGERS. (Secker & Warburg. 10/6).

IN an age of levelling down, it is rare and wonderful to find a contemporary example of palace art. In the long poem, which gives the title to the book, the poet weaves a great voluptuous tapestry—with sensuous austertiy! For the poet always keeps his head, which is also the essence of etiquette. He never tries, as the tavern or temple poet may, to put the reader into contact with some current of potency and so transcend the words which have worked initiation and invocation. In this palace art one must follow the rules and experience the words exactly as the poet 'sees' them, or else not appear at all at the pageant.

> *Naked they came, a niggling core of girls*
> *Magotting gaily in the curling wool*
> *Of morning mist . . .*

There is no alternative here, or in any of the baroque magic of this spectacle of the 'blazing and bellowing bull' and the girl who draws her shoulders 'shyly about her', the chinning of the 'ruffling wave' and knees that 'divide and slide, Slide and divide' past islands 'shawled and shimmering', and of the other enchantments which lead to the final prodigious mating. It is a magnificent and aristocratic performance.

In other poems, the mental filter occasionally interferes. Certain words (swithering, midges, hyphenate, elbowing, ladders, etc.) recur as the poet's own stimulus to himself, just as he uses alliteration to spur his own genius rather than to please the reader. As for the B.B.C. poems, they are inevitably coarser-grained. *The Journey Of The Magi* is almost told to Vachel Lindsay's kiddies; and there are times when wit is doused in rhyming puns of the twenties. But don't let the B.B.C. spoil your delight in the major significance of Mr. Rodgers at his best. The best is in the great tradition of the masters of courtly music.

OSWELL BLAKESTON

A POST ROMANTIC

The Poems of Arthur Hugh Clough edited by H. F. LOWRY, A. L. P. NORRINGTON AND F. L. MULHAUSER (The Clarendon Press, 35s.)

EITHER because of pride or humility, Arthur Hugh Clough was curiously indifferent about his poetry. He has never had his full due because enthusiasts for post-Romantic verse would be unlikely to enjoy Clough, and those who were likely to enjoy Clough would be unlikely to have their attention fixed on post-Romantic poetry.

Now if Clough had lived in the nineteen-thirties his fame would have gone abroad quickly enough. In his own day his verse might have been an antidote to the amorphous and sticky welter put out by minor poets after Shelley. Few people were free enough of the drug of what had gone before to appreciate what was new in Clough. He had a small but choice following at Oxford where he taught.

Clough is not a great poet. He was greatly oppressed with religious doubt and an honest mind. But he had no belief in his doubts as Shelley had. Clough's attitude was a shrug.

But Clough is a good poet. He put conversation into verse in a way that had been neglected for generations. This was not common speech, or the 'very language of men': Clough's conversational style is quite manifestly drawn from Clough's conversation, several degrees more interesting than common speech. In his best poetry it is obvious that Clough was consciously avoiding unnatural poeticisms. It is another proof, borne out by his actions, of his honesty.

To me he is the most readable, that is, enjoyable, poet of the nineteenth century: that is, however, a narrow and perhaps too matter-of-fact taste. At any rate, although Clough has nothing like the vision of Wordsworth, the energy of Shelley, the sensibility of Keats, the skill of Tennyson or the clearsightedness of Claire—at least he has nothing like the amount of damnonsense of the Romantics. He wrote so well that most of his past admirers have had the uneasy feeling that what he wrote was hardly poetry. *Say not the struggle naught availeth* could be understood of course, and perhaps

So—on Montorio's height for a last farewell of the city.
Tibur I have not seen, nor the lakes that of old I had dreamt of;

Tibur I shall not see, nor Anio's waters, nor deep en-
Folded in Sabine recesses the valley and villa of Horace;

but this must have stuck in some gizzards:

Now supposing the French or the Neapolitan soldier
Should by some evil chance come exploring the Maison Serny
(Where the family English are all to assemble for safety),
Am I prepared to lay down my life for the British female?
Really, who knows? one has bowed and talked, till, little by little,
All the natural heat has escaped of the chivalrous spirit.
Oh, one conformed, of course; but one doesn't die for good manners,
Stab or shoot, or be shot, by way of a graceful attention.

Clough was not a great poet but *The Bothie* and *Amours de Voyage* are great narrative poems. This variorum edition of Clough shows the poet at work, is supported by abundant attractive notes, and supplies twelve poems hitherto unpublished. The editors are to be congratulated on the valuable result of their labours. It now remains for a new critical assessment to be made of a too-long-neglected poet.

MURIEL SPARK

POETS AND PREACHERS

The Clay Verge by JACK R. CLEMO (Chatto & Windus, 4s. 6d.)
Light and Dark by PETER YATES (Chatto & Windus, 6s.)
The Summer Dance by J. C. HALL (John Lehmann, 8s. 6d.)

THE key-note of these poems of Jack Clemo's is a harsh and savage distrust of all sensuous beauty whether in the natural world of grass, trees and flowers or in the impulses of sexual love. This distrust is not merely Calvinistic as the author proclaims—it is positively Manichaean. It dares take its delight only in the grim and daily further encroaching sterility of the Cornish clay dumps and pits that the poet knows so well, or in the excavator itself, the instrument of that sterile progress:

"Our clay-dumps are converging on the land:
Each day a few more flowers are killed, . .
And it is a joy to me
To lengthen thus a finger of God
That wars with Poetry;"

and he bitterly laments the child whom he cannot reduce (seduce?) to the same harsh ways:

"She has turned from God and me
To pluck a foxglove tenderly."

To him, in imagery that but for its intense sincerity would be ludicrous, this is the way of perdition; for

"I have no friends but things inanimate,
And taste no mood of God save Dogma's power."

Yet the very harshness of this poet's philosophy, its Tertullian-like grimness, is the source of his poetry's undeniable power. There is never a superfluous word, never an artificial image. never less than a complete marriage of manner and mood. This it is that gives a fierce vitality—there is no light and shade here—to these lacerating and self-lacerating disquisitions on the human condition.

How different are the 'metaphysical' complexities of Peter Yates's new book: In a different way he, too, rejects the simplicity of nature, whether in bird song or sex, but not because he feels it a lure to moral damnation, but just because

"We think, and thought corrupts love's image of the world;"

and Nature, as he laments elsewhere,

"like an unknown voice,
Offers a green and childhood choice
Too simple now to comprehend."

His rejection is an unwilling one. He knows too well what Yeats calls "The fascination of what's difficult" (in fact the most important poem here. "Apologia", opens: 'Only the challenge of difficult feats . . .') It is never a struggle in which the challenger is despised, however, or even in which the triumph of mind is either assured or capable of bringing full satisfaction if it were. The fact that the poet is thought-tormented results in the conflict itself being presented largely in cerebral and abstract terms; the resulting imagery cannot be said to be obscure but it is often, one feels, needlessly opaque. The thought is often interesting, and never negligible; but there is a lack of fire and of an apprehension of sensuous realities that is the more noticeable after reading Clemo's book; even though the chief fire one encounters there is the infernal one.

HERMANN PESCHMANN

WREY GARDINER

Journal 1950

JANUARY 2ND. Only fools begin their diaries on the first day of the year. They are the people who write little notes in the tiny space of about an inch and a half devoted to each day. They make a few New Year resolutions then fade away into the oblivion of anonymity and boredom. It is better perhaps to be a clown than a fool, as I was when I played the part of the dying year 1949 at the party of some complete strangers. I had on nothing but a sheet and my socks. For two minutes I held a varied audience with an impassioned speech. Then I dropped to the floor and was finally slain by Howard Sergeant in a diaper and the red sash of the Legion of Honour as the New Year. After having kissed all the females he fell upon my recumbent corpse and broke my glasses which had fallen under me. Crawling sadly from the room my sheet slipped and the audience had a good view of my aged posterior. So are the great humiliated. But it is perhaps better to be a successful clown than a miserable poet and lover of women.

JANUARY 3RD. I have to write the truth in other words. I am tired of editing peoples' beastly little poems. Never have I been at such a crossroads with music all through my being, spilling over my desire, but the horrible mud heap of the past piling up through the days. Time and women are the enemies of us all, we who create and live in the misery of daily difficulties and distractions. I am tempted very badly to try a play englobing all my personal mythologies. . . The only three forms practible are the novel, the play and the travel epic, apart from this continual chorus of the frank and free diary I am attempting here. Women —there are too many of them—distract me. Drink feeds me. The marsh lights above my misery lure me on. My ideal is truth. The precise statement. To renounce the word stained by habit. *The Tears of the Blind Lions* is a book of poems I have received today with the compliments of the season from one of the most famous of American publishers, the tall Laughlin IV, a man of steel and snow. The cool, almost cold notes of a piano stir my solitude. Swinburne with his algolagnia—wonderful word—and his endless repetition of himself, keeps me company. I am drinking more and spending more money that I haven't got. How pompous and often unsatisfying is Gide's diary, and yet with it all the greatest work he ever wrote. I am going to discuss with my

one and only a possible modus vivendi with another. God knows what will come of it. Why can't women be like a lot of good little girls in a girl school, afraid of the master's cane. But girls are not caned. Hence our tears. I must hurry to catch up with myself, re-writing, editing, poems and all. It is only work done that counts.

SOME BOOKS OF THE QUARTER

So Long To Learn by JOHN MASEFIELD. (Heinemann. 18/-). *Les Fleurs du Mal*, rendered into English by ALAN CONDER. (Cassell. 12/6). *New Directions in Prose and Poetry*, No. 13. (Peter Owen. 30/-). *Wrack at Tidesend* by OSBERT SITWELL. (Macmillan. 10/6).

A man of Mr. Masefield's age and position is bound to write some day the kind of book *So Long To Learn* is, and it is bound to be interesting. It must be, too, his picture of the literary life of his youth that holds us with the spell of *The Ancient Mariner* telling of things seen and done long ago and far away. He writes fascinatingly of the days when Rossetti was the master of the young men and Browning the obscure modern poet who only wrote for the few. It is a little wistfully that we read to-day of the hunger of everybody for good reading.

'What lover of poetry would hesitate one instant between daily bread and a book of undying delight.'

And W. B. Yeats who said 'I always encourage everybody'.

It must be a saddening thought to Mr. Masefield that the local cinema and TV have ousted the teller of tales, the novel a dying form and the tale in verse extinct. He may be heartened perhaps by the revival of interest in the verse play.

The translation of *Les Fleurs du Mal* by Alan Conder is in a handy format and easy to read, though the use of words like 'bosom' and 'bust' seem a little odd to-day. Even English readers of Baudelaire to-day are not shy of descriptions of the female form. Mr. Conder has given us Baudelaire in a bustle.

In the latest omnibus of American writing *New Directions 13*, the bitterly prejudiced—the editor's own words—Kenneth Rexroth continues the travel diary of his European journey called *The Dragon and the Unicorn*. Whether his candid sexuality—again the editor's own words—is really as healthy as all that is perhaps a matter for reflection. Mr. Laughlin who, as is well known, has done so much for the publishing of serious books in

America writes in his prefatory note on the difficulties of penalising costs which are the same for us in this country. It is beginning to be realised everywhere that the nigger in the woodpile is the bookseller and librarian who still want an expensive article at half the price it costs to produce it. And publishers are too timorous to get together to break a stranglehold which is killing them.

This number I find rather disappointing. No Paul Bowles, and the poetry, except perhaps for a large batch of the usual Nicholas Moore and Kenneth Rexroth's saga of European prostitutioj, not particularly exciting. Perhaps the gloomy view taken by its editor and, in an article by Mr. Harold K. Guinsburg is a warning that we must expect a dampening down of the fires of culture in America as well as here as the writer's life becomes more and more an impossible one. But there are still many interesting pieces in this monumental 542 page volume, and for anybody who wants to keep in touch with the best avant garde writing in America to-day thirty shillings is not too much.

I can remember the discovery in the year of its publication in 1927 of Osbert Sitwell's *England Reclaimed* in a famous bookshop in Oxford Street. In that year among the dead fluffy sounds of poetry of the twenties it seemed like the crack of a whip. Most young men like to hear this stimulating noise in the dust of the contemporary scene. I was fascinated. The famous Mrs. Kimber, bustling and dusting, and some other characters make their appearance, but four-fifths of the book contains new poems. It is a magnificent frieze of characters as varied as a Canterbury pilgrimage, a brilliant collection of people like a picture by Hogarth or Rowlandson. It is a strange wrack but not without a strange smell of tide and time. W. G.

NEW POEMS: 1953

The second volume in the series of P.E.N. anthologies of new poetry appearing under the imprint of Michael Joseph is now in preparation, to be edited by Robert Conquest, Michael Hamburger and Howard Sergeant. Manuscripts (which should be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope) should be addressed to: The Editors, *New Poems 1953*, P.E.N., 62/63 Glebe Place, London, S.W.3, and only poems which have not appeared in book form can be considered. All manuscripts should reach the Editors by 30th September, 1952. Payment will be made for all poems accepted.